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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	DS-00	EB-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NRC-00	NSAE-00
	OES-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	MCC-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	TDOE-00	DRL-00
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W		

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P 041402Z MAY 05
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0510
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001355

NSC FOR CBARTON
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2014
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, VE
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CALLS FOR END TO BLACK LISTING: OPPOSITION
DOESN'T BUY IT

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABELARDO A. ARIAS FOR REASONS 1.4 (d
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Summary

1. (U) Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called on officials to stop using the so-called Tascon List to discriminate against opponents April 15. The list contains the names of all the Venezuelans who signed petitions calling for the presidential recall referendum, and has been used by officials to deny services and employment to many Venezuelans. Some opponents called the list McCarthyism, while some officials rebutted accusations alleging that opponents, too, discriminated against Chavez supporters with their own lists. Some Chavez opponents threatened to take the issue to the international courts, while the Attorney

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General's Office and the Ombudsman's office promise to investigate, though with little enthusiasm. End Summary.

Bury the Tascon List!

2. (U) Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called on officials to "bury the Luis Tascon list", during a televised cabinet meeting on April 15. Chavez said he received constant complaints from people claiming to have been denied jobs because they appeared on the Tascon list. He said the "famous list undoubtedly played an important role at one specific moment, but it has passed." He also called on governors and mayors to work with small and medium businessmen, regardless of whether their names appeared on the list. Miranda Governor Diosdado Cabello told reporters Chavez's order put in their place those "who think they are more Chavista than Chavez."

What List?

3. (C) The Tascon list came to be in February 2003, when Movimiento Quinta Republica (MVR) Deputy Luis Tascon put a search engine on his web-site purportedly to allow people to see if they were among those who signed petitions calling for a consultative referendum in November 2002. It was thus possible for anyone to enter a Venezuelan identity number and find out if that person had signed the referendum petitions. Tascon claimed to have gotten the first list by combing the state National Electoral Council (CNE) offices' information. After the Supreme Court rejected the consultative referendum, the NGO Sumate carried out a second signature drive for a recall referendum. Tascon again put the names on his web-site. Tascon alleges that he acquired the second list from a member of Sumate, two weeks before obtaining another compilation of the signatures through the CNE. Leaders of Sumate and the opposition deny this, and maintain that the CNE violated the spirit of the law by giving the names to Tascon, who was the representative of the pro-Chavez Comando Maisanta to the CNE. The list of people who signed eventually became publicly available on CD ROM.

Discrimination

4. (C) Reports that government officials were using the

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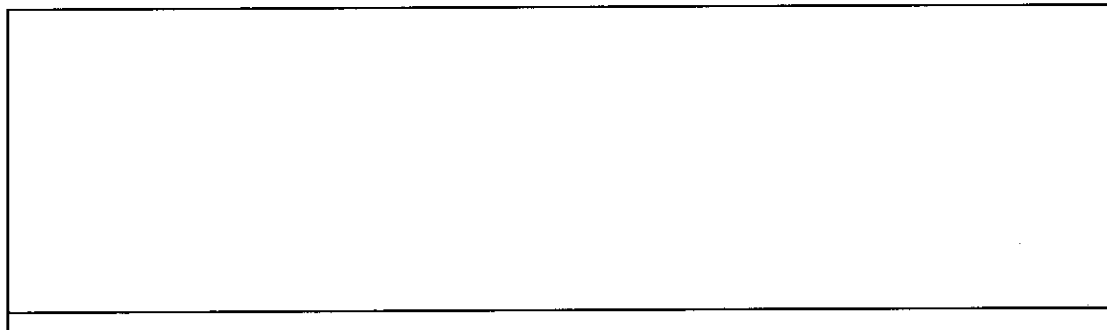
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list to discriminate against signers began to surface soon after Tascon put the search engine on his web site. The Consular section of the Embassy receive numerous complaints from visa applicants that they could not get new passports or ID cards if they had signed. In early 2004 Health Minister Roger Capella publicly defended the firing public sector workers who had signed the petitions.

5. (U) Antonio Suarez, President of the United National Federation of Public Employees told reporters on April 19 that the organization believed 5,000 public employees had been victims of discrimination as a result of signing the petitions, and that they had documented 780 cases. 200 of these people were fired, including 42 by FOGADE (akin to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.), 20 by the Ministry of Interior and Justice, 11 by the Caracas subway system, and 12

from Hidrocapital (the Caracas water company). Suarez complained to the Attorney General's Office, the Ombudsman's Office, the CNE, the Supreme Court, the OAS, and the UNDP in July 2004, without result. In October 2004, he raised the issue with a visiting OIT mission. Additionally, since early 2004, there have been purges of judges and prosecutors, and GOV pressure on private companies to fire workers who appear on the list to maintain government contracts, including foreign oil companies.

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announced a national crusade on April 20 to "persecute the persecutors", and invited people who felt they had been victims of discrimination to write in to his web page.

GOV Confusion

5. (U) Following Chavez's announcement, on April 19, Ombudsman German Mundarain admitted his office had received many complaints about public sector firings, adding that he

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"had the conviction that in the private sector, as in the public" people's rights had been violated. CNE President Jorge Rodriguez repeated the argument that the opposition had been equally guilty of firing Chavistas who signed the GOV sponsored recall campaign against opposition deputies on April 22. Labor Minister Cristina Iglesias took the argument one step further on April 28, stating that most of the complaints her office had received were of opposition discrimination against GOV supporters. Solicitor General Marisol Plaza denied that any discrimination had taken place, calling Chavez's statement a political maneuver to win over opposition supporters.

----- Opposition Strikes Back -----

6. (C) The blacklist became a hot public issue on April 5, when the tabloid "TalCual" began a series of articles detailing cases of discrimination and comparing the Tascon list to the McCarthy-era blacklist. At the same time, Ana Julia Jatar, who is tracking the blacklisting for Sumate, wrote a column comparing the GOV policy to South African apartheid. Following Chavez's statement, on April 18, Venezuelan Workers' Confederation Secretary General Manuel Cova called on the GOV to prove its sincerity by rehiring the fired state oil company workers and all other fired public employees. Others announced they would request the International Criminal Court try Chavez for crimes against humanity [redacted] while Primero Justicia Deputy Julio Borges called on the Attorney General to open an investigation of Tascon on April 22.

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----- Buried How Deep? -----

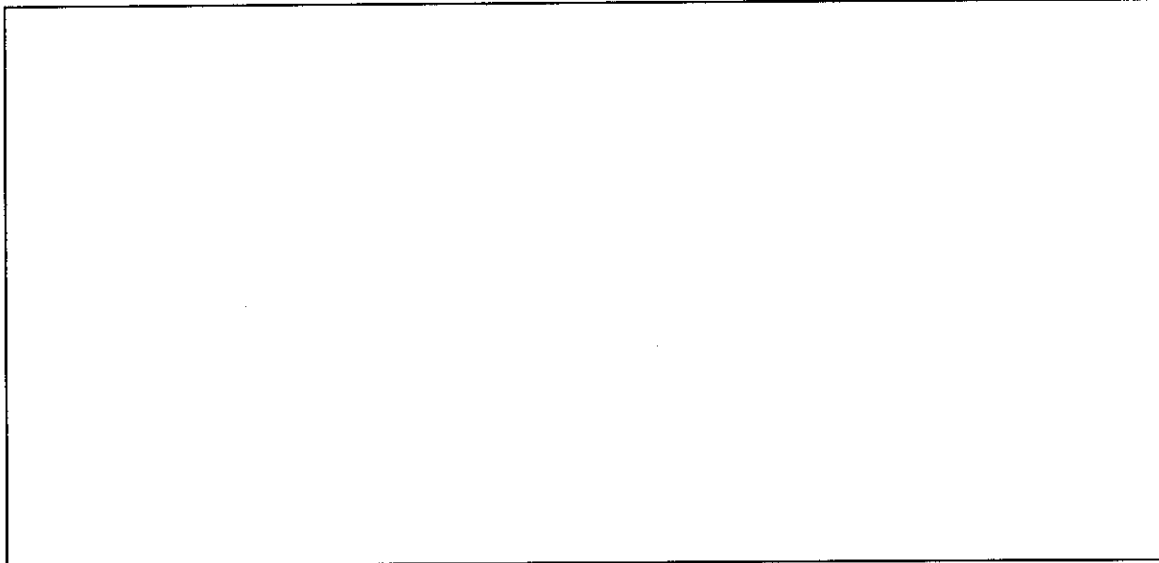
7. (U) Despite Chavez's call to cease using the Tascon list, reports of discrimination continued. Caracas daily "El Nacional" reported that the Supreme Court had withdrawn its offer to appoint a lawyer as an alternate judge on April 22, because he had signed the referendum petition. On April 29 "El Universal" reported that 200 teachers had taken over an educational office in Miranda State, to protest the harassment of the 10,000 teachers who had signed the petition.

----- Comment -----

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